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SAN BENITO COUNTY

SCENIC ROADS AND HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

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GENERAL PLAN REVISION

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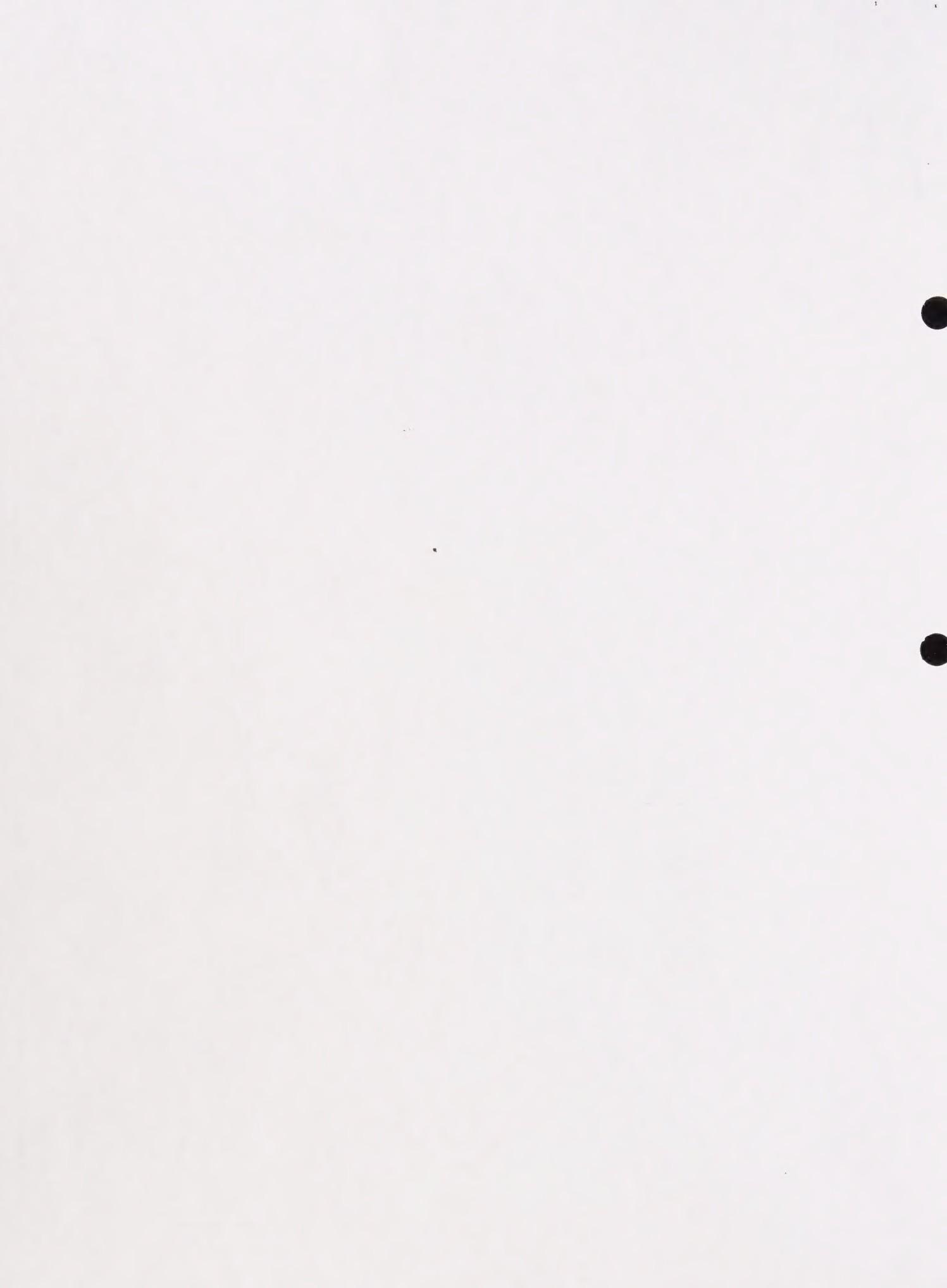


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PREFACE

Counties and cities in the State of California have been required by law to prepare a Scenic Highway Element as one of nine mandated elements of the General Plan. The legislature recognizing the need for the protection of the visual resources of the State has directed local government to take specific action to protect and preserve scenic resources.

The California State Scenic Highway Program was established in 1963 to conserve the State's scenic beauty, particularly as viewed by travelers on the State Highway System. Supplementing the State program, some cities and counties have established local scenic routes which protect vistas from unsightly development or guide visitors through the most attractive sections of the city or county. The main purpose of the Scenic Roads and Highways Element is to evaluate potential routes in a city or county for inclusion in the Scenic Highway System. A supplemental purpose is to determine the desirability of establishing a scenic drive through the city or county.

SCENIC ROADS AND HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The intent of the Scenic Roads and Highways Element is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of San Benito County through the conservation of designated scenic highways and their corresponding scenic corridors.

Other than state designated Scenic Highway routes, the County has the authority to set criteria and further designate additional county roadways as a part of their Scenic Roads and Highways Element. These additional roadways will be established using the criteria set forth within this Element.

San Benito County is endowed with the extraordinary scenic qualities afforded it by both the mountain and agricultural environments. The Open Space and Conservation Elements point out that San Benito County has high scenic qualities when compared to roads in the Metropolitan Bay Area. Many of the County's rural roads enjoy certain amenities which all County residents might wish to preserve. These scenic qualities differ in degree on the various roads, but as a whole, make up an important County resource.

This element represents an effort to define those scenic qualities and to present a program for their utilization, preservation and enhancement.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

The intent of the Legislature in adopting requirements for a Scenic Highway Element to the General Plan was that it provides the basis for official State designation of Scenic Highways. Governmental Code Section 65302(h) requires a scenic highway element of all city and county general plans, as follows:

"The plan shall include a 'scenic highway element for the development, establishment, and protection of scenic highways pursuant to the provisions of Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2 of Division of the Streets and Highways Code'."

DEFINITIONS

Scenic Corridor: The visible land area outside of a transportation corridor (road) right-of-way and generally described as the "view from the road". A Scenic Corridor shall be established adjacent to all Scenic Roads and Highways. The Corridor shall consist of all land as described in the following table:

TABLE 1

DESCRIPTION OF SCENIC CORRIDOR WIDTHS

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. State Highway 101 | ALL LAND 400 FEET EITHER SIDE OF THE CENTERLINE OF THE ROAD. |
| 2. State Highway 129 | ALL LAND 340 FEET EITHER SIDE OF THE CENTERLINE OF THE ROAD. |
| 3. State Highway 146 | ALL LAND 340 FEET EITHER SIDE OF THE CENTERLINE OF THE ROAD. |

The maximum Corridor width may be reduced dependent upon the topography and/or road alignment. Uses allowed within the Scenic Corridor are described in Appendix A.

Official State Scenic Highway:

Scenic Highways officially designated by the State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee after application from local jurisdictions and only if on State Scenic Highway Master Plan.

Rural Designated Scenic Highway: A route which traverses a visual corridor within which natural scenic resources and aesthetic values will be protected and enhanced, and is outside the urban boundary.

Urban Designated Scenic Highway: A route which traverses a visual corridor which offers an unhindered view of attractive urban and/or natural resources, and is within the urban boundaries of the Cities of San Juan Bautista or Hollister.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The Scenic Highway Element relates directly to the Open Space and the Circulation Elements and indirectly to the Land Use Element. The element seeks, through design, to protect the natural and manmade environment within the scenic corridor. Its strongest relationship is with the Open Space/Conservation Element, as a scenic corridor, by definition, will transverse significant natural and urban open space areas.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF A SCENIC HIGHWAY

The following standards were used in the evaluation of those highways shown in the State's Scenic Highway Master Plan:

1. The scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent scenic, historic or aesthetic value during all seasons.
2. Consideration should be given those highways or routes which are:
 - a. State of jurisdictional entry routes.
 - b. predominantly used for recreation or vacation travel.
 - c. utilized for one day sightseeing or study trips.
 - d. a part of integrated or semi-integrated scenic route system that traverses varied scenic corridors for longer trips.
 - e. through areas of extraordinary scenic value.
 - f. typical or demonstrative of varied scenic factors available within the jurisdiction.
3. If possible, all principal landscape and topographical type areas should be represented in the system.
4. Routes of historic significance which connect places of interest should be considered even though the route is of marginal scenic significance.

In light of the State criteria, more specific guidelines for the selection of county-wide scenic highways have been developed. In most cases, many county roads would meet at least one of the criteria mentioned in the following list. However, to give it a special significance, several of the criteria must be met in order to be truly classified "Scenic".

Criteria for selection of scenic roads and highways in San Benito County are:

1. that it be designated on State Scenic Highway Master Plan or,
2. the scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent and continuous scenic, cultural, or aesthetic value during all seasons.
3. the scenic corridor may have a variety of features, natural or human-made.
4. where appropriate, the scenic corridor should preserve the natural integrity or the ecosystem, or present an undisturbed nature - both landscape and panorama.
5. the highway is used predominantly for recreation travel or provides the visitor or resident a visual experience related to San Benito County's major attractions such as, the agricultural areas, range lands or mountains.

GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL

The major goal of this element is the preservation of the scenic qualities of San Benito County. The scenic qualities of the County are a major attraction to both the resident and visitor. Clearly this is an important part of the agricultural/rural environment that should be preserved.

Many activities, public or private, if carried out without consideration for the visual character of the area can have a detrimental effect on the quality of that visual experience. However, under the proper supervision, with recognized guidelines these same activities can occur and will strengthen the rural/agricultural scenic quality of San Benito County.

In order to achieve the county scenic highway goal, the following objectives, policies and actions are established as they relate to specific activities and conditions:

OBJECTIVE

Enhance and preserve the visual qualities of the designated scenic corridors.

Certain transportation corridors in the County are recognized as having unusual or outstanding scenic qualities. These scenic corridors need not be limited only to highways. It is the intent of this element to protect those transportation corridors.

POLICY #1

It is the policy of San Benito County to provide for the protection of certain transportation corridors which are recognized as having unusual or outstanding scenic qualities.

ACTIONS

Update the Scenic Corridor Combining District Ordinance as the best means of protecting the corridor. The review zone would be placed on all parcels located within the scenic corridor.

GRADING

OBJECTIVE

Protect the visual characteristics of the landform as well as the viewshed from disruption by grading operations.

POLICY #2

Because the County recognizes the valuable resources of soil and the need for the preservation of natural environments and because the County recognizes that grading can have significant adverse impacts within scenic areas, it is the County's policy to carefully review all projects involving grading within Scenic Corridors.

ACTIONS

Grading in the Scenic Corridor and on scenic roads or highways shall be reviewed for compliance with the objectives of this element, by County staff.

Final contour and landscaping recommendations shall be made to minimize the visual impact of the grading on the scenic corridor, in conformance with the County's grading requirements.

Vegetative cover, preferably native to the area, and other screening devices should be provided to hide grading scars, blend with the natural landscape, and provide erosion control.

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Minimize the obstruction of the viewshed with development.

POLICY #3

Recognizing that most architectural designs are compatible with scenic areas, but that some can have significant adverse impact on the scenic resource, which the County seeks to preserve, it will be the County's policy to review proposals to insure that the obstruction of viewsheds is minimized.

ACTIONS

Review site planning to insure a reasonable and attractive appearance from the highway concurrent with a harmonious relationship with the existing landscape.

Development which may be determined not to be in harmonious rela-

tionship with the existing landscape shall be screened from view through planting or other forms of visual buffers.

Building height and setbacks shall be regulated to protect the field of vision in the scenic corridor. Building heights shall not exceed and setback requirements shall not be less than those of the basic zoning district.

LANDSCAPING

OBJECTIVE

Enhance the visual character of the corridor through appropriate landscaping.

POLICY #4

It will be the policy of the County to enhance the visual character of the Scenic Corridor where appropriate.

ACTIONS

Landscaping in the scenic corridors should be compatible with local vegetation and ground forms. Indigenous plants and grasses should be used where appropriate and possible as a means of reestablishing the natural landscape.

Ornamental landscaping around buildings and plants such as row cropping, fruit trees and other agricultural species, are desired and acceptable uses in the Scenic Corridor. Also included within the acceptable landscaped uses are grasses and fairway trees of parks and golf courses.

UTILITY LINES

OBJECTIVE

Minimize the visual impact of utility lines in the scenic corridor.

POLICY #5

It will be the County's policy to review each application and to provide mitigation measures which will minimize the visual impact of utility lines on the Scenic Corridor.

ACTIONS

All new electric and communication distribution facilities proposed within the scenic corridor shall be placed underground whenever feasible.

Where overhead utility lines are unavoidable, every effort should be made to reduce the visual impact through elements of design.

SIGNS

OBJECTIVE

Eliminate signs within the Scenic Corridor other than those identified in the permitted use section of the Zoning Ordinance. This does not apply to temporary signs, advertising the sale of agricultural commodities produced or processed on site, nor does it apply to State, County or City signs.

POLICY #6

It will be the policy of San Benito County to protect the Scenic Corridor from the proliferation of unnecessary signs.

ACTIONS

Develop a sign ordinance which controls the locations and types of signs throughout the County areas. Suggested permitted uses within a Scenic Corridor have been provided in Appendix A. These uses could be used as a guideline for the development of a Scenic Highway Combining District Ordinance.

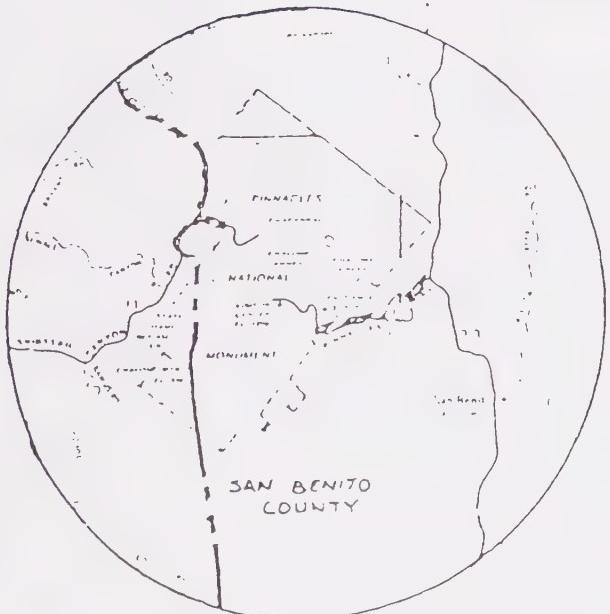
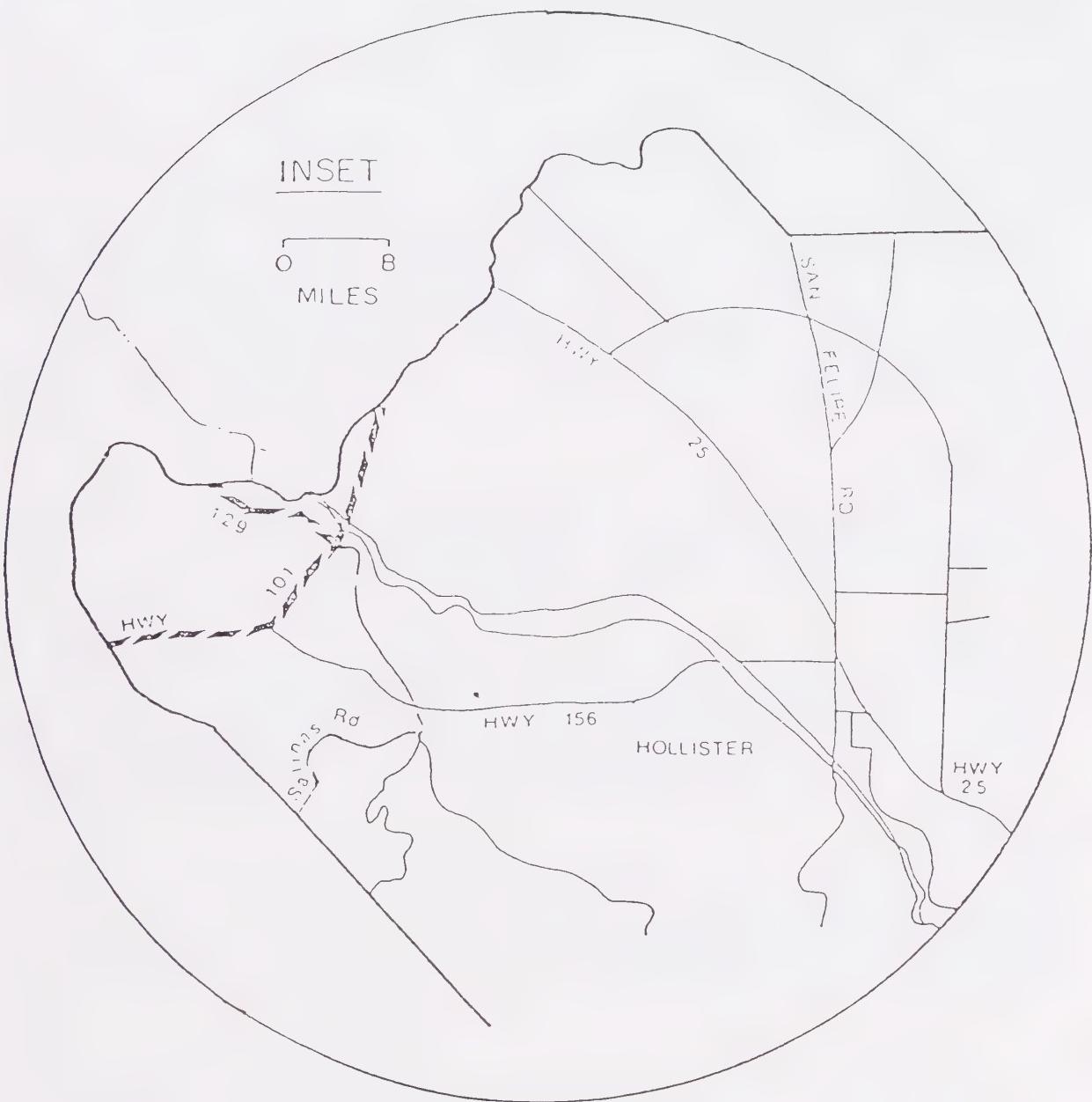
DESCRIPTION OF DESIGNATED SCENIC HIGHWAYS

Designated Scenic Highways:

1. State Highway 101
2. State Highway 129
3. State Highway 146

ROADWAY DESCRIPTION:

1. That portion of Highway 101 commencing at the San Benito-Santa Clara County line and thence southwest to the San Benito-Monterey County line.
2. All of State Highway 129 from its intersection with State Highway 101 westerly to the San Benito-Santa Cruz County line.
3. All of Highway 146 leading from Highway 25 westerly to the boundary of the Pinnacles National Monument. Thence proceeding from the western park boundary to the San Benito-Monterey County line.



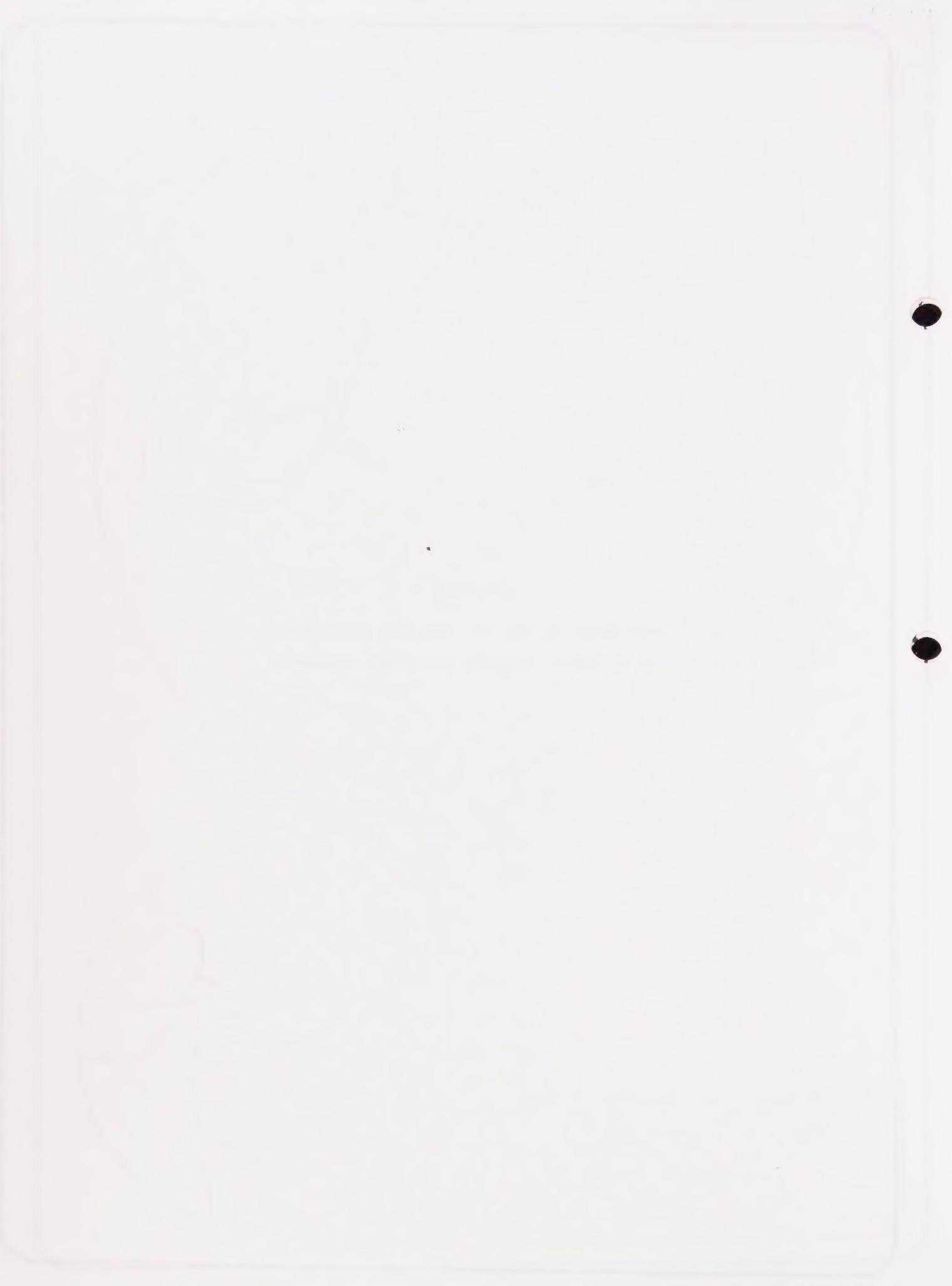
SAN BENITO COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN

Scenic Highways

FIGURE I.

APPENDIX A

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A SCENIC HIGHWAY CORRIDOR ORDINANCE



GUIDELINES FOR SCENIC HIGHWAY CORRIDOR ORDINANCE

The following permitted uses are intended for use as a guide in the preparation of a Scenic Highway Corridor Ordinance:

PERMITTED USES:

- a) All agricultural uses and buildings are permitted within the Scenic Corridors.
- b) All uses which are allowable within the Scenic Corridor will be subject to the base zone setback and height requirements.
- c) Dwelling units, garages, sheds and recreational uses are allowable within the corridor, subject to staff approval of site planning with right of review by the Planning Commission, to ensure their compatibility with the surrounding landscape.
- d) One identification sign per entrance for a ranch, farm or homesite is permissible subject to the County's Sign Ordinance.
- e) One sign per business establishment is acceptable.
- f) Temporary signs advertising sale of local agricultural commodities as well as those identified in the permitted use section of the Zoning Ordinance.

NON PERMITTED USES:

- a. No uncovered or unscreened storage areas, excluding agricultural uses.
- b. No off-premises advertising.
- c. No free-standing signs except for one sign per entrance identifying the ranch, farm or home site.
- d. No flashing or moving signs.

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